

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL INSPECTOR WEST MIDDLESEX.

To the Warden and Municipal Council of the County of Middlesex :

GENTLEMEN,—The last time I had the honor of reporting the status of the schools in West Middlesex, it was deemed advisable, considering I had held office only a few months, to deal in generalities which, if made public, would scarcely irritate the sensibilities even of those localities prominent in my mind when penning the report. The County Council honored me with a vote of thanks, consigned the report, I fancy to the pigeon holes of obscurity; no person felt its influence and, consequently, as a stimulant, it proved worthless in reprobating what was deficient, or applauding what was excellent. The Chairman of the Education Committee and myself have several times recently discussed the advisability of approaching more closely a detailed report, if not of particular schools, at least of townships. Of course, the risk of getting contrary to public opinion had to be considered—and you well understand its potent influence on the actions of most men—at the same time, justice demands that meritorious efforts should receive re-

cognition, while abuses are often without correction or mitigation, because they are not fully recognized by those having power to control them.

We are accustomed to hear our school system boasted as producing marvellous results, compared with some other countries its pre-eminence scarcely admits of doubt, yet, close investigation will reveal the unpleasant fact, that after thirty years' experience our children are not so proficient in the three R's, reading, writing and arithmetic as we would have ourselves believe. This defection need not be attributed to the system any more than indifferent performance on a good musical instrument need be attributed to the instrument. Our system is sufficient to the end required, but laxity in its administration produces discord and prevents those benefits possible from its excellencies.

In many sections, trustees feel justified in securing teachers at the lowest possible salaries; they say, "they are good enough for our schools," consequently the children's interests are

sacrificed, time lost that can never be recalled, apathy and disgust generated, all for the sake of an economy justly denominated "penny wise and pound foolish." It may be urged since such teachers hold legal certificates, an injustice would be perpetrated were they not to find employment, besides, the possession of such documents proves, if it prove anything, their qualification for teaching. Experience will amply satisfy the most sceptical that men of ability will not spend their time without an approach to adequate remuneration, if teaching do not compensate, they can find avenues to other professions and thus be lost so far as the Public Schools are concerned. Those having special aptitude for school work readily find engagement at fair salaries, and were it not for dread of competition from inferior workmen, many having real native ability would be attracted to a profession offering such a vast field for usefulness. As in other walks of life, so in this, plenty of space near the summit, but near the foundation a large area is occupied and little or no probability of a moderate livelihood.

Before the year 1877, it was possible by means of a money bag, or a dogged perseverance to secure sufficient data to pass muster for a third class certificate, in a short time the country became flooded with this grade of teachers, as expected the lowest type of work was performed and our schools

placed largely under the management of mere boys and girls not having sufficient ballast to acquit themselves intelligently in an ordinary conversation. Of the development of the faculties of children, they were entirely ignorant, not even had they control over their own tempers, hence the broils in some schools became so fierce and frequent that the basis of our school system was in danger of becoming a wreck. In 1877, professional training was introduced which proposes, in some measure, to remove one of the dark clouds by preventing those from securing certificates who exhibit no special sympathy for the teacher's work; already we have substantial reason for believing such legislation came none too soon. This year additional subjects are added for examination, and with care on the part of the County Examiners, it will shortly be impossible to secure a teacher who will frustrate every attempt to extract anything like respectable results from our admirable school system. On my visits to many sections, I undertook to set forth the advantages flowing from the payment of liberal salaries. In reply, the argument confronted me, "we were taught in such a manner, why cannot our children learn as well as we?" A farmer worth eight or ten thousand dollars will greatly consider this contention conclusive, on the other hand, he will secure the best agricultural

implements and never think of using the reaping-hook instead of the machine. Practically he can see the propriety of reform in everything save education, to be consistent, he should cut his grain with a sickle and discard modern improvements on the farm as well as in the school room.

In West Middlesex there are ninety-seven schools employing one hundred and ten teachers, five hold first class old County Board Certificates, thirty-eight are provincial and sixty-seven hold the lowest grade permissible by law. It may seem strange that such a fine, rich agricultural district should employ so few provincial teachers, stranger still it may seem that in '76 there were only, excluding Strathroy not under my inspection, seventeen holding this grade. By no means would it be true to say these sixty-seven were all doing inferior work, in fact, some of them are ornaments to their class and quite equivalent in zeal and ability to very good second class teachers. I regret that a few of the higher grade exhibit but slight traces of being imbued with the proper spirit for the school-room, therefore the inference appears inevitable that something beyond certificate is required to prove fitness for training children. An attempt is being made to raise the attainments of third class teachers in this division higher than the legal minimum, our Board exacts 60 per cent. on the aggregate of Arithmetic

and Grammar. We entertain the belief this fairly tests the mental capacity of a candidate, and excludes many adventurers who desire entrance to a profession for which neither nature nor art designed them. The effect of this step makes itself manifest on those coming up for examination, besides, it would be reprehensible to omit stating those passing last year are giving satisfaction hitherto unknown in the history of third class beginners.

The teachers meet twice a year in the town of Strathroy for the discussion of questions tending to promote the welfare of the schools. About 90 out of 110 were present after the first meeting, and it was a noticeable feature, those absent were the ones who most needed the influence such gatherings are designed to have. The discussions were very creditable and must exert both on teachers and schools a decidedly beneficial influence. The Board of Trustees for the town generously placed a large room in one of the schools at our disposal; also gave their teachers the privilege of meeting with us. We expect before the current year closes to form the nucleus of a library towards which the Minister of Education forwarded a check for \$50; if this Council grant us an additional \$50, we can then secure \$200 worth of professional reading matter. This cannot fail to aid materially in strengthening the effective force of our teachers.

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The salaries paid, are in many instances too low, in some, they are more than equal to the return, even this should scarcely be considered a calamity. When an inferior teacher is receiving \$450 per annum and his certificate expires, it is not difficult to persuade the trustees to pay the same or a little more to one holding a second class certificate, whereas, had they been paying a salary in accordance with the work of the teacher, the task of rising to a higher figure might have proven too much for ordinary persuasive powers.

The classification of the pupils, generally speaking, admits of considerable improvement. The pressure of parents to have them reading in advanced books has counterpoised the judgment of many teachers, so it is not exceptional to find a pupil in the fourth class whose attainments would not place him higher than the second. Parents judge of progress by promotion on the basis of reading, teachers take advantage of this, and the attendant train of evils assuredly follow. Recognizing the urgent necessity for reformation and desiring to avoid inspectoral action, the teachers subscribed to defray the expenses of having prepared a full set of promotion questions. These were mailed to all the schools about the beginning of May, during the current year an amount of attention will be given to this department which cannot fail to re-

fect a wholesome influence. A teacher leaving a school well classified finds himself among combustible material if he attempt to do what he knows is right on taking charge of another school defective in this particular. If all were well arranged, friction at the commencement would be avoided, and a current in favor, not against the teacher would be secured. What would a person having an elementary knowledge of our school system think of fourth and fifth classes not being able to find the price of three bushels of strawberries at 10 cents per quart? Yet, such is the case; in other subjects their attainments were fully equal to their knowledge of arithmetic. Incredible as it may appear, this question has been given many times, and my private notes would show the vast number who failed to solve it. I am not prepared to say the teachers and pupils of such schools did not labor vigorously, but it is possible to work faithfully and accomplish almost nothing. Unless some degree of tact and skill mark the operations of school life, we are apt to discover the dim and hazy views given of many subjects serve only to create a distaste for study, and convince those inclined that way that our school system is an ignoble failure. On the other side, many cheering truths could be presented. I do not fail in proclaiming them when merited, while reticence, to a large extent, marks my

conduct with respect to those who are time-servers, or want capacity to elevate a school.

Throughout the division, many changes of teachers took place during, or at the close of 1877, these are regarded as detrimental to the progress of the schools, such a statement should be accepted with considerable caution. Certainly a change from good to bad is anything but desirable, but the opposite frequently occurs and should be duly credited. Were all our schools under efficient teachers, changes would have some deteriorating effect, were they under inferior teachers, the change for better or worse would hardly be perceptible. Since they are not under either conditions, the changes have a varied effect, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. A desire for variety leads both trustees and teachers to seek different associations, hence we may reasonably presume the time, is far in the future when the same teachers will occupy the same schools for any great length of time. The working of the system should be so similar that, generally speaking, any teacher would be at home in any school. With good classification and time-tables, this would not be impossible, but highly probable. A few dollars additional will attract a teacher from one end of the province to the other, the interests, at stake are sufficient, or ought to be, to induce us to

secure ability of the highest available order, if we cannot find it in our own county. Native talent deserves preference when superior, when not, it should find its way where the comparative standing is not measured by such an ideal as a district like Middlesex should have erected. Before closing this section, I may remark, throughout my entire official connection with the schools, I have everywhere been treated with more kindness and consideration, than my inception to office would lead me to anticipate. During two years, not a harsh word has passed between myself and a teacher, frequently other methods were suggested and if difference of opinion existed, the question was discussed in a calm spirit, and of course, the one with the weaker argument succumbed.

The grants payable half-yearly have not any great effect in securing a larger attendance. When the county was young and money scarce, it is barely possible they did much towards inviting attention towards the financial aspect of the schools. But, with rapidly increasing wealth, little if any value can be placed on them as an attractive element, hence it is problematical if they were withdrawn, whether the attendance would be sensibly diminished. Possibly a better scheme would be to make them larger and distribute in proportion to the work done, in and around the school room. By this method, those indifferent to progress

would soon become eliminated and every section would semi-annually ascertain what it was really doing. Practically there would not be many obstacles to overcome, and every teacher would then vindicate publicly his reputation in such a way as to defy cavil and contradiction. It is easy to understand how strong a man it requires to labor faithfully when left almost entirely to his own discretion, with no person except the Inspector twice a year, to give credit or discredit for progress or otherwise. The most careless agriculturist paying the smallest wages to one of his servants looks carefully to the units of work performed, the same principle of supervision pervading our public schools is as desirable as it would be profitable. Payment by results has sufficient merit to invite criticism and from what it is said to have done for the High Schools, there is ground for believing the extension of the principle to solve the Public School problem might at

least receive a fair trial.

In the matter of school houses, trustees are awakened to a sense of providing good ones; they are anxious to have school grounds and school buildings more attractive than public opinion will sometimes let them. During the last eighteen months, thirteen new houses have been, or are in process of erection. By the close of another year, not a log building can be found in the Division, so that my entire attention can be devoted to the internal economy of the schools. Many school sites are yet less than the required minimum, but trustees are rapidly feeling the necessity of complying with the regulations, and I am glad to say, in no case has compulsion been exercised, an explanation was sufficient, and almost invariably met a willing and hearty response. If they could as easily be made appreciate the value of an efficient teacher, it would be pleasant to bear testimony to the excellence of our schools.

Townships	Brick Houses	Frame Houses	Provincial Teachers in 1876	Provincial Teachers in 1877	Average in 1877	Highest Salary paid Male Teacher	Highest Salary paid Female Teacher
Adehide	4	7	0	3	417	\$500	\$325
Caradoc	10	6	1	5	466	450	300
Ekfrid	3	8	1	4	412	487	300
Lobo	5	3	6	4	366	575	400
McGillivray	6	10	4	6	525	500	375
Metcalfe	7	3	0	4	284	500	360
Moss	7	2	0	2	336	500	370
Williams E.	2	7	3	5	350	480	330
Williams W.	1	8	2	5	473	500	360

From the foregoing table, it may be seen the highest salary is paid by the

towaship of Lobo, to the same municipality belongs the doubtful compliment of reducing its provincial teachers at the rate of one annually. Of the 110 teachers, 47 are Presbyterians, 33 Methodists, 12 English Church, 10 Baptists, 5 Roman Catholics, 3 Disciples. The salaries of lady teachers range from \$375 to \$800 per annum. I find in many sections the trustees regard a provincial lady much preferable to a third class gentleman, yet, they are not willing to pay the lady as much as the lower graded gentleman.

In conclusion, permit me to cherish the hope you will lend your influence to extend the usefulness of our schools.

As municipal officers you can aid in making the sections uniform in their ability to pay respectable salaries, or should this prove impracticable, urge the formation of Township Boards. By levying more than an equivalent to the Legislative Grant and contending for its distribution by results, you will introduce an element ultimately designed to mark a new era in the history of Public School education.

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Yours respectfully,

J. S. CARSON.

STRATHROY, June 4th, 1878.

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL INSPECTOR EAST MIDDLESEX

To the Warden and Members of the Municipal Corporation of the County of Middlesex:

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honor to submit herewith my annual report on the Public Schools of the Eastern Inspectorial Division of this County, for the year ending 31st December 1877.

The statistical information given in the following tables is chiefly derived from the returns made by the officers of the different schools. They nearly all give evidence of as much pro-

gress as could reasonably be expected to be made against such drawbacks, as irregularity of attendance, frequent changing of teachers, and the lack of professional training, or natural aptitude on the part of so many of those who teach, each of which hindrances I dwell on at considerable length in the last two reports to your Council.

The table of average attendance

shows a gradual improvement.

	No. Pupils enrolled.	Percentage of average Attendance.		
		1875	1876	1877
Biddulph	922	43	46	49½
Delaware	496	46	42	45¾
Dorchester N.	1328	38	39	40½
London	2363	44	46	45
Nissouri W.	986	50	50	51¾
Westminster	1795	44	46	48½
Lucan	305	53	50	58
London E.	906	36	40	49½
Petersville	330	44	48	46

The operation of the compulsory attendance clauses of the School Law has helped to effect this improvement. In many of the school sections these clauses were carried out with the result, I am informed by both teachers and trustees, that children who had never attended before, were sent to school on account of the message delivered by the census taker, others for the same reason attended more regularly than they had done before. I find there are many parents and trustees who do not clearly understand their duties and responsibilities in this matter. It would prove a simple and effective plan to have the sections of the Law and General Regulations relating to compulsory attendance printed on slips of paper, one of which might be left by the census taker at the house of every parent and guardian. Another cause, which has contributed perhaps even more to increase the average attendance, is, that the teachers and public are becoming more keenly alive to the fact, that the large-

ness of the percentage of attendance is so often a fair criterion of the excellence and efficiency of the teacher. I have seen a teacher move from school to school, and have found every school he taught regularly and well attended; others again always have a small attendance compared with the number on the register. In the latter case one often hears a parent say: "I don't know why it is, but I cannot get my children to go to that teacher," in the former you will hear: "We cannot keep the children at home." I have visited a school where all the pupils were present except two, but on the average I find about half of those present whose names are on the register. It has to be considered that large scholars who attend during the winter only, remain enrolled during the year.

	Total Expenditure for all School Purposes.	Cost per Annum per regis- tered pupil.	Rate per \$1 on the County equalized Asses- ment.
Biddulph	\$4774.66	\$5.17	.0038
Delaware	3033.92	6.14	.0040
Dorchester N.	6864.15	5.19	.0043
London	17067.57	7.22	.0036
Nissouri W.	5572.12	5.67	.0035
Westminster	14781.58	7.23	.0040
London East	4761.74	5.25	.0092
Lucan	1371.60	4.50	.0152
Petersville	1258.23	3.81	.0114

The total amount expended in 1877, for school purposes was \$59,483.57, being \$336.93 less than in 1876.

Leaving out the amounts paid for building, the cost per registered pupil would be reduced for Biddulph to \$4.40; London, \$5.13; Westminster, \$4.91; and London East, \$4.17.

TEACHERS.—Less than one-fourth of our teachers have attended the Normal School. Two hold provincial first class certificates; thirty-four, provincial second class; three teach on old county board certificates, but the majority on the new county board third class certificates.

	No. of Male Teachers.	Avg. Male Teachers' Salary.	Avg. Female Teachers' Salary.	Highest Salary paid.
Biddulph	5	\$4.48	\$3.91	\$5.00
Delaware	3	4.30	3.62	5.00
Dorchester	10	4.00	2.79	5.00
London	22	4.24	2.70	5.00
Nissouri W.	6	4.30	3.80	5.00
Westminster	8	4.40	3.00	5.20

London East and Lucan paid their Head Masters \$600, each.

The only teachers who have continuously taught the same school since I first officially visited it, little over three years ago, are Mr. Alex. McMillan, No. 5, Biddulph, Miss Kate Sproat, No. 6, Biddulph, Mrs. J. A. Lynam, No. 2, Westminster, Miss Flora McColl, No. 10, Westminster, and Messrs. W. D. Eckert and A. Stock, London East. The County competition examination, held last December, attested the excellent work done by at least three of these teachers.

The establishment of Model Schools was a very important step in the practical training of teachers. As so much of your time was taken up at the Council meeting last December in a thorough consideration of the method of conducting the County Model Schools I will take time only to repeat that the Principal and assistants thereof keep a register of the marks assigned to each teacher in training for each of the following points: for order, attention, interest, manner, and progress of the class while teaching his trial lessons; for preparation, fluency, manner, energy, accuracy, watchfulness, thoroughness, and correctness of pronunciation; mode of receiving answers, correction of errors, power of giving explanation, general management, and general value of the lesson; grammatical accuracy of language used while conducting recitations. This curriculum covers a wide field and the person who has been instructed in all

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these departments of the science and art of teaching should be expected to have natural aptitude. Hence in the case of such an one I feel little hesitation in admitting his resignation. It has been my painful duty, on finding the school in a state of complete anarchy, to subordinate to a considerable proportion of the pupils making no progress if not retrograding in their studies. The Model School does not fully test the sagacity, common sense, and clear judgment so necessary to the teacher who has to deal single handed with idle, disobedient children, and unreasonable, indulgent parents. Nor is this all, there is truth in the observation of a celebrated English educationist: "The fact is that with *enthusiasm, energy, and sympathy* a teacher is sure to be to some extent successful though his theory be ever so unsound and his methods ever so unscientific. The contrary seldom holds good." *Energy is a sine qua non.* Though a teacher have every other quality important to success, and have not energy he is nothing. The

warm inspired air in a school room on a hot summer day is depressing enough without the aid of natural inclination. It is not impious to pray Heaven preserve the school from falling into the hands of a lazy, slothful teacher. With but few exceptions the teachers trained at the East Middlesex Model School are doing well, some of them proving the benefits of that training beyond expectation.

In conclusion I desire to bear testimony to the integrity, fidelity, and zeal of the majority of our teachers, also to the intelligent co-operation generally received at the hands of the trustees. I have again to express my sincere gratitude to the various Municipal officers for their useful and ready assistance and to the many friends with whom I have come in contact for their uniform kindness and courtesy.

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

JNO. DEARNESS,

Pub. Sch. Insp.

LONDON, Ont., 4th June 1878.

manly, accuracy, energy, watchfulness, thoroughness, and correctness of pronunciation; mode of receiving answers; correction of errors; power of explanation; general manner; and general value of the lesson; and general accuracy of language used while conducting recitations. This examination covers a wide field and the person who has been instructed in all

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